
FOUNDATION & CORPORATE

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New site could transform grants process

Soon, a Web site is going live that could slowly but steadily revolutionize grantseeking. If *CommonGrantApplication.com* follows its chartered course, one day your nonprofit could be linking there to apply for grants from foundations all over the country.

The Web site is a project of **Oceanpeak Inc.**, and shouldn't be confused with the term "common grant application," which is known as a widely accepted format for turning in grant applications.

At its highest hope, CGA will allow grantseekers to research an array of funders by topic; store standard application data; manage multiple grant applications; and participate in social networking.

CGA, the brainchild of **Jeff Lawrence** — a technology entrepreneur and trustee of the **Lawrence Foundation** — is a by-product of his experiences as a grantmaker.

Using paper-based applications proved too time-consuming for Lawrence; the foundation's executive director **Lori Mitchell**; and the foundation's applicants.

Lawrence implemented an online application process at his family foundation that provided the basis for a national database of grantseekers and grantmakers.

Unlike Web sites that currently provide grantseekers with foundation information, this one will allow them to set up accounts and manage profiles; and to choose how much information they wish to make public.

Some of the services will be free — such as browsing simple background information about funders. But members can choose to pay monthly fees from \$20 to \$100 to receive more detailed information about funders; tailor and save different application profiles to send to multiple funders; and even apply for grants through the site.

Lawrence said grantseekers will pay a few dollars to submit their applications, and he expects the notion may not sit well with users at first. But he will strive to educate them on how much money they will ultimately save by not mailing application packages or letters of intent. Also, the process will save applicants time since they could apply in a few minutes if they already have their information saved on the site — versus spending hours to put individual application packages together.

The site has benefits for grantmakers, too, allowing them to browse background information on nonprofits, including the past grants they've received, and providing a manageable system for them to collect and process applications.

While it's just getting off the ground, Lawrence hopes CGA encourages "collaboration, the sharing of information and social networking."

"Hopefully," he said, "it can help make [the grant application process] more transparent."

For more information about CGA or to contact Jeff Lawrence or Lori Mitchell, go to www.commongrantapplication.com. □